

CHURCH HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH

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March, 1925: The Malayalam wing of the Christian Literature Society established. The Malayalam Language wing of the Christian Literature Society was established in March, 1925. Rev. V. P. Mammen, Mr. K. K. Kuruvilla and Mr. T. K. Kuruvilla were the Mar Thoma Church members who co-operated with the Anglican Church leaders for the establishment of the Malayalam wing.

March, 1817: The Great Bible Translator, Benjamin Baily, reaches Kottayam. Rev. Thomas Norton, the first missionary of the Church Missionary Society reached Kottayam on 19 June, 1816. The second Missionary, Benjamin Baily and his wife Elizabeth, reached Kottayam on March, 1817. Benjamin Baily translated and printed the New Testament in Malayalam in 1829, and the full Bible was translated and printed in 1841-42. He returned to England on 20 March, 1850 after 33 years of mission work in Kerala.

1 March, 1854: Pioneer missionary Hudson Taylor lands in Shanghai, China. Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission in 1865, and he popularized the idea that missionaries should live and dress like the people they seek to evangelize.

2 March, 1791: Founder of Methodism, John Wesley dies in London. Thanks to his organizational genius, we know exactly how many followers he had when he died: 71,668 British members, 294 preachers, 43,265 American members with 198 preachers and 19 missionaries. Today Methodists number about 30 million worldwide.

3 March, 1263: French cardinal, Hugh of St. Cher, dies. He reputedly compiled the first Bible concordance and was the first person to divide the Old and New Testaments into chapters.

3 March, 1547: At the Seventh Session of the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church defines its theology of the sacraments. Arguing that seven sacraments are necessary for salvation; Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony; the council rejected the teaching of most Protestants that only two were required: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

4 March, 1866: Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ and the Church of Christ, dies. He sought desperately to get back to a "simple evangelical Christianity" founded on the Bible alone.

7 March 1990: Very Rev. P. J. Thomas passes away. Rev. Thomas was a deep scholar and gifted linguist, besides being an ardent evangelist. He passed his B. D. degree examination from United Theological College, Bangalore with distinction and joined the ministry of the Church. The call came to him to take up the mission work in Ankola when he was Vicar of the Kottayam Jerusalem Mar Thoma Parish. He readily accepted the challenge and went to Ankola with his family and established the Ashram there with two young graduates as fellow workers, Mr. Philip Oommen (now Philipose Mar Chrysostom Metropolitan) and Mr. John Thomas (late Rev. P. John Thomas). Rev. P. J. Thomas was designated Vicar General in 1976 after he came back to Kerala. He passed away on March 7, 1990.

7 March, 1817: Hindus burn the Christian Church in Tiruvalla. During the early years of the nineteenth century Travancore Christians had to face many difficulties from the high class Hindus. After receiving permission from the Travancore Government, the Christians in Tiruvalla constructed a new church, which the Hindus did not like. So on Tuesday, 7 March 1817 (Kumbam 26, 990 ME) they gathered together and severely beat up the Christians who came out of the Church after Holy Communion. They even burned the church to ashes. Col. Munro who was the British resident of the time gave strict instructions to the Divan of Travancore to take appropriate action immediately. Culprits were booked and were fined 7000 Panam (Currency of that time) to be paid to the Christians to make a new church and another 60,000 Panam was paid from the Government Treasury to the Metropolitan of the time as compensation.

7 March, 1530: Pope Clement VII rejects Henry VIII's request to divorce Catherine of Aragon. Henry eventually responded by declaring himself supreme head of England's church.

7 March, 1997: Rev. John Varghese of Sihora Ashram (b.5/7/1915) passes away. Rev John Varghese B.A., B.D. was a member of the Valetu Thoppil Family of Puthencavu, near Chengannur. After his education in the Trivandrum Maharajas College, he became a teacher in Perumbavoor Ashram School and later through the influence of Rev. Dr. C. E. Abraham, he became one of the co-founders of the Sihora Ashram in Madhya Pradesh, 1942.

8 March, 1698: British missionary Thomas Bray and four laymen founded the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) "to advance the honor of God and the good of mankind by promoting Christian knowledge both at home and in the other parts of the world by the best methods that should offer". S.P.C.K. started its work in India in 1711 and now is one of the leading Christian publishing Houses in India.

8 March, 1835: Freedom for slaves. CMS missionaries, Benjamin Bailey and Joseph Peet, gave freedom to all slaves in the Munro Island on 8th March, 1835. Slavery was abolished from Travancore in 1855.

9 March, 1952: Very. Rev. V. P. Mammen passes away. He was one of the first four graduates who accepted ordination together in the Mar Thoma Church. The others were Rev. V. T. Chacko, Rev. K. E. Oommen and Rev. George John. They could have secured very lucrative secular posts in the state government service, but they opted to serve the Church. Rev. Mammen spent his life and resources building up the Sunday School Samajam and made it one of the best Christian education organizations in the whole of India. He was also the Secretary General of All India Sunday School Association for some time.

9 March, 1895: Beginning of Maramon convention. The first Maramon convention was held from Friday 9th March to Sunday 18th March, 1895 (10 days) under the leadership of Most. Rev. Titus I Mar Thoma Metropolitan. M/s. David and Wordsworth from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) were the speakers. Deacon Kakkasseril Varughese of Kunnampulam translated the messages from English to Malayalam.

9 March, 320 (traditional date): Roman soldiers leave Christian soldiers naked on the ice of a frozen pond in Sebaste, Armenia. They placed baths of hot water around them to tempt them to renounce their faith. When one did so, a pagan guard inspired by the fortitude of the remaining Christians; converted and joined the freezing Christians. They were all killed and made famous by Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa.

9 March, 395: (traditional date): Gregory of Nyssa, Cappadocian father and bishop, dies. An outstanding thinker, theologian, orator, and ascetical author, he was very influential in developing the theology of the Trinity.

9 March, 1936: C. V. Kunjiraman Speaks at Maramon Convention. Most of the Maramon convention speakers are Christian leaders. Non Christian leaders also are allowed to speak occasionally to express their views. On 09 March 1936 Mr. C. V. Kunjiraman, one of the prominent Ezhava (SNDP) leaders was given the privilege to speak in the convention. Religious harmony always existed in Kerala.

10 March, 1748: John Newton, the captain of a slave ship, converts to Christianity during a huge storm at sea. He had been reading Thomas Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, and was struck by a line about the "uncertain continuance of life." He eventually became an Anglican clergyman, the author of the famous hymn "Amazing Grace," and a zealous abolitionist.

10 March, 1898: George Muller dies at the age of 93. George Muller (born on 27th Sep, 1805) was an ordinary man. His father was a tax collector. He was a man of faith. His life continues to be an inspiration and witness to all who commit

their lives to God. By faith and prayer he opened many orphanages in England and he could support and take care of more than 18,000 orphan children during his lifetime. His work still continues through George Muller Foundation.

11 March, 1948: Beginning of the Mission Hospital in Kattanam. The inauguration of the St. Thomas Mission Hospital in Kattanam was held on 11 March, 1948, in a building in a 4 acre plot donated by Dr. C. G. Kurian, Chagethrariyil. This is the largest hospital (200 beds) of the Mar Thoma Church.

11 March, 1812: Fire engulfs missionary William Carey's print shop in Serampore, India, destroying his massive polyglot dictionary, two grammar books, sets of type for 14 eastern languages, and whole versions of the Bible. Undaunted, Carey said, "The loss is heavy, but as traveling a road the second time is usually done with greater ease and certainty than the first time, so I trust the work will lose nothing of real value . . . We are cast down but not in despair." News of the fire also catapulted Carey to fame, bringing in abundant funds and volunteer labor.

13 March, 1815: Presbyterian medical missionary James Hepburn is born in Milton, Pennsylvania. In the course of his missions work, he compiled the first Japanese-English dictionary and supervised the first complete translation of the Bible into Japanese.

13 March, 1942: Valiya Yacob Kathanar (25 July, 1851, to 13 March, 1942) – Cheriyaamadathil, Vazhoor dies. Yacob Kathanar became a deacon at the age of 13 and established more than 20 parishes in and around Kottayam. He was an able social reformer and helped in the establishment of many English schools in our church.

14 March, 1872: Journalist Henry Stanley and explorer-missionary David Livingstone part company, having spent the last five months in Africa together. Stanley returned to England to write his bestseller, *How I Found Livingstone*. Livingstone, in the meantime, got lost again; in a swamp literally up to his neck. Within a year and a half, he died in a mud hut, kneeling beside his cot in prayer.

15 March, 1517: Needing money to rebuild St. Peter's basilica, Pope Leo X announces a special sale of indulgences. A Dominican named Johann Tetzel led the way in promoting the sale in Germany and erroneously declared that indulgences would cover future sins (Leo's forgave all past sins). The teaching angered monk Martin Luther, who soon posted his 95 Theses in response.

18 March, 1861: London's Metropolitan Tabernacle, the sanctuary of English Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, opens. Spurgeon had insisted that the enormous building employ Greek architecture because the New Testament was written in Greek—a decision that influenced church architecture throughout the world.

19 March 1813 – Birth of David Livingstone. David Livingstone was born in Blantyre, Scotland on March 19, 1813. The son of poor pious parents he was the first white man to cross Africa with the Gospel of Christ. His accomplishments were incalculable: traveler, zoologist, philanthropist, linguist, author, geographer, mercantile director, physician, theologian, explorer, astronomer, missionary, teacher, evangelist and emancipator.

20 March, 1852: Abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, daughter of famous Congregational minister Lyman Beecher, publishes *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (which had been serialized in an antislavery newspaper). The book sold one million copies and was so influential in arousing antislavery sentiment that Abraham Lincoln is reputed to have said upon meeting Stowe in 1863: "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this Great War!"

21 March, 1778: Charles Wesley, brother of John Wesley and author of 8,989 hymns (including "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "And Can It Be," "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing," "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," "Soldiers of Christ, Arise," and "Rejoice! The Lord Is King!"), dies at age 81.

21 March, 1747: Slave trading sea captain John Newton dramatically converts to Christianity during a violent storm. He is best known for penning the hymn "Amazing Grace".

22 March, 337: Constantine, the first Christian emperor of Rome, dies at age 47. As emperor, he issued an edict officially tolerating Christianity, though he did little to stave off paganism. He also summoned the Council of Nicea to settle the Arian dispute over the nature of Christ.

22 March, 1884: Birth of Kotturethu K. J. C. Abraham Kasseesa (d.Dec 27, 1957). Ordained in 1914, he was the vicar of the parishes in and around Chengannur. He had the courage to object the educational reforms of Divan of Travancore, C. P. Ramaswamy Iyyer, which restricted the religious freedom of Christians.

23 March, 1966: The Archbishop of Canterbury meets with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican — the first such meeting between Anglican and Catholic leaders since Henry VIII broke with Rome more than 400 years earlier.

24 March, 1928: Birth of Rev. Dr. K. P. Mathai. Rev. Mathai was a member of the Karimpanammannil Family of Anicadu, near Tiruvalla. For 32 years he was a teacher in the South Indian Biblical Seminary at Bangarapet in Karnataka. He was ordained in 1987 and till his retirement he worked with our Hoskote Medical Mission Centre. He passed away on 20 August 2001.

24 March, 1820: Blind hymn writer Fanny Crosby, author of more than 9,000 hymns, is born. Her works include "Blessed Assurance," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," "To God Be the Glory," "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "Rescue the Perishing," and "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross."

25 March, 1625: England's King James I dies. In 1604, at the Hampton Court Conference, James had authorized the translation project that produced the 1611 King James (Authorized) Version of the Bible.

25 March, 1908 (11 Meenam 1083 M.E): God saves Titus I Mar Thoma. Headquarters of our Church was shifted from Maramon to Tiruvalla in 1908. At that time there was no Aramana (Bishop's House) in Tiruvalla and the Bishop Titus I was staying in a thatched building near the present SCS School. In the early hours of 11 Meenam 1083 M.E, this building was set on fire by the enemies of the Mar Thoma Church. The Bishop, who was sleeping in this building, was saved by the children and boarding master, that stayed in the nearby S. C. S. School.

28 March, 1888: Birth of Vicar General, Very Rev. V. T. Chacko (d.Aug 17, 1954). A member of the Vadakkethu family of Kuriannoor, he was a very able administrator. While he was the Vicar of the Trichur Parish, he conducted the Sabha Mandalam (which usually meets at Tiruvalla) in Trichur. He was one of the Division Secretaries and Sabha Secretary of our Church.

28 March, 1984: Rev. K. M. Jacob Kottara, Puyappally (June 1881) passes away. He became a priest on 08 October, 1903, and served the Church for 86 long years. His name is there in the Guinness Book of Records under the heading "Longest Religious Service".

30 March 1996: Miss. Mariam Samuel passes away. From 1946 to 1967, Miss Samuel was the Mar Thoma Sevika Sanghom Asst Secretary, Sevika Sanghom School Manager and the Principal of the Vanitha Mandiram. She was called home on 30th March, 1996.

